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AUTHOR Silverthorne, Colin P.; Goldberg, Richard M.
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ABSTRACT

The design detailed in this report was aimed at facilitating a meaningful implementation of a drug abuse training program into a portion of the Florida State School System. It was pointed toward curriculum development rather than personal change. The focus of the design was to provide a well-balanced approach to participants understanding their feeling about the issues that they would have to present to the students, and also provide the necessary facts and resources that they would require to teach about drug abuse. In designing the workshop, strong use was made of the laboratory method. The training evolved out of three one-day information-focused in-service training days for teachers only. Some comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop are presented. The staff felt some real sense of accomplishment at the end of the experience and were generally pleased with the successful blend of information sharing and laboratory method. (Author)

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A DRUG ABUSE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS

Colin P. Silverthorne and Richard M. Goldberg[1,2]

The design detailed here was aimed at facilitating a meaningful implementation of a drug abuse training program into a portion of the Florida State School System. It was pointed toward curriculum development, rather than personal change. The focus of the design was to provide a well-balanced approach to participants understanding their feelings about the issues that they would have to present to their students, and also provide the necessary facts and resources that they would require to teach about drug abuse.

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INTRODUCTION

Like many organizations, schools are often forced to comply with edicts over which they have little or no control. Many times an idea which appears to be good, useful and necessary is legislated into law and the appropriate organization then needs to respond. This particular workshop was a week-long program designed to aid in the implementation of such a law. Basically stated, this law requires that all Florida schools provide a drug abuse curriculum for grades kindergarten through 12th.

In designing the workshop, we made strong use of the laboratory method (Bradford, Gibb and Benne, 1964). The early periods of the experience emphasized conscious observations of the processes and interaction taking place within groups made up of both faculty and students. While personal devdopment occurred as an incidental feature of the experience, the primary goal was to increase the communication skills and the interpersonal effectiveness of the individuals in task-oriented entities which were to be an important aspect of the latter half of the program. These task groups, formed about half way into the program, had the specific goal of formulating a drug abuse curriculum. A secondary training function was to provide faculty with information and skills which would enable them to fully utilize students and community resources in dealing with the drug program.

THE PROGRAM

The participants came from schools in six Florida counties. For the most part, teachers were those who would be responsible for teaching the courses. In principle, all were attending the workshop on a voluntary basis. However, it should be pointed out that due to many misunderstandings and attitudinal sets on the part of those involved in the recruitment and selection of participants, many schools were not represented, not all participants volunteered, and not all teachers would subsequently be involved in the teaching of drug abuse. Also included in the workshop were some 27 students. Most of these students came from the same schools as the faculty participants; some came from local colleges. Groups were formed to contain both students and faculty throughout the workshop.

It was our feeling that teachers could not develop a useful guide for the development of curriculum material until they came to some level of understanding regarding their own personal views about drugs and drug abuse as well as the views of their colleagues and students. Consequently, we attempted to plan a program which would improve communication among the teachers, provide an atmosphere in which attitudes toward drugs could be aired and considered, and which would allow students to be

identified as a valuable resource. Second, we felt that the initial input during training should permit an awareness of feelings about drugs. Out of the confrontations with these feelings would come problem solving. The problem solving could not be approached until many of the teachers' hidden agendas, both about drugs and the circumstances which brought them to the workshop, could be surfaced and discussed. Further, we thought that training in two distinctly different focused groups would help individuals to apply the skills learned in the first group to the later group and subsequently apply these learnings within their back-home environments. Participants were first divided into cummunication groups which focused on airing feelings and the observation of group process. Later in the program the participants were divided into task teams to specifically work on curriculum development.

The training evolved out of three one-day information-focused in-service training days for teachers only. Following these sessions it became apparent that supplying the information on drugs was not sufficient to prepare the teachers for the task that lay ahead. The training experience consisted of a five-day laboratory in June of 1971. The first morning was largely taken up with registration and several short speeches of intro-

duction from people responsible for the program. These talks were considered necessary since the program funding was dependent on many people for whom visibility was important. Further, it gave the program a legitimacy which many of the teachers needed to see. However, this did have the unfortunate effect of disappointing many who were anticipating a more innovative approach. The feelings generated over this caused some lost ground. The laboratory really, therefore, started the first afternoon with a two-hour microlab. The design was fairly straight-forward. Participants were first taken through a series of clusters and techniques which would allow them to meet and make contact with most of the other participants. They were given the opportunity to experience groups of two, four, and eight people. This was followed by separating students and teachers for the first and only time. During this period groups of either teachers or students met to list their expectations for the week. The purpose of this exercise was threefold. Firstly, it permitted an opening up of some of the ideas participants had brought with them; secondly, it permitted students and teachers to understand each other's position; and finally, it permitted the staff an awareness of some of the issues that needed to be looked at over the period of the laboratory. The expectations were then posted and all the participants were given an opportunity to review the list. Participants then

formed into trios generally consisting of two teachers and one student to discuss the lists. Participants then were formed into "communication groups" which were maximally mixed in terms of teachers, students, and home school. These groups met during the first three days of the workshop. Their purpose was to open up communication among the participants about drugs, the program, and the information provided during the week. Each day, participants were provided with some hard and usually controversial facts about drugs. This was done with lectures and films. The outside resource people included two physicians on the medical effect of drugs, a psychologist who discussed facts and myths about marijuana, a narcotics agent complete with sample kit, a juvenile court judge on the extent of the drug problem among juveniles in his county, and a community drug program director on local referral sources. These were built into the program and were always followed by communication groups. These groups were to consider their attitudes and feelings about what had been presented to them rather than reiterate the facts provided. Openness and giving and receiving feedback about perceptions of drug problems and how each participant dealt with his feelings about the new information were encouraged by the trainer. Brief but specific training was included in clear communication, overcoming difficulties in listening, and skills in describing another's behavior.

The participants devoted the last two and a half days to a problem solving sequence, working on the real issues that were to be overcome and included in the drug abuse program. Participants were reassigned to different groups for this process. These task groups were designated as the "curriculum groups" and participants were assigned to groups on the basis of grade level taught (for teachers) and age (for students). The purpose of these groups was not to produce a final itemized curriculum but rather provide writing teams with all the information and guidelines that they would need to produce the finished package. These writing teams were to be formed after the workshop by volunteers from the laboratory.

To facilitate the process in the curriculum groups, it was felt that a group exercise, designed to increase awareness of interpersonal and organization processes, would be useful. General boredom with the usual ranking exercises on problem solving by consensus and a sense of creativity on the part of the staff, led to the development of a new ranking exercise. In this exercise, we expanded a ranking on the relative harmful effects of drugs from an article by Irwin (1970). Thus we had a twelve-item ranking test on drugs which could be used in much the same way as the earlier N.A.S.A. ranking exercise. R. K. Ready took

primary responsibility for the exercise, although most of the staff had some input in the final draft. While the exercise could still be tightened up, it proved to be a very successful exercise for illustrating both group processes and providing information on drugs. [3]

On the final day of the laboratory, the participants' task in the curriculum groups was to develop lists of guidelines for the writing teams. Three sets of guidelines were provided: one for grades kindergarten through 5; one for grades 6 through 8; and the final set for grades 9 through 12. While there were several groups for each set of grade levels, the guidelines showed a great deal of overlap. Some time was spent on sharing what each curriculum group had suggested, but this time was limited. The significant point about this stage of the laboratory is that within some four hours every curriculum group had produced a well-documented set of guidelines with excellent teamwork. The amount of effective work accomplished in this short amount of time was considerable, and exceeded the staff's expectations about participants and the success of the learnings developed in the first part of the program.

During the following month, the writing teams were set up to finalize the curriculum guidelines. This had to be completed

for implementation in the in-service training period prior to the start of the school year, 1971-72. This was accomplished and an extremely creditable document was produced. This curriculum guide involved the commitment and effort of almost one hundred people. It received a great deal of respect and support from teachers in the six systems once it was distributed. The title under which the guide was published was "Operation Prevention: A Curriculum Guide K-12" (Martin, W.C., 1971) [4]

SOME COMMENTS ON THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE SUMMER WORKSHOP

On the positive side, the laboratory successfully blended the laboratory approach and an information-giving program. It succeeded in providing teachers with effective group and communication skills. While the general feeling on the part of teachers at the onset of the program was one of apprehension and skepticism, by the end of the program it was easy to observe an atmosphere of commitment and involvement. The main concern of many teachers by the end of the program was whether they would be able to receive administrative support for innovative actions, once they returned home. Further, another important positive aspect of the program was that it allowed teachers to realize the resources available and fully utilize them. Students were used successfully as resources and the interaction between teacher and student led to a better understanding of each other,

the problems they faced, and the role demands upon each group. While the problems involved in taking the learnings back to the home communities were considered throughout the laboratory, some further special consideration should have been given to this aspect. The students proved to be excellent resources and participants. However, it was thought that sixteen should be the minimum age in future workshops. This conclusion was reached since the more emotional students were all under sixteen. Further, since all students were "on site" and away from home, there were some legal aspects around responsibility for the students between sessions that could have been difficult to deal with given the focus of the program and the many other details which needed attention during the workshop.

The most significant drawback of the experience was the problems involved organizationally among the in-service training coordinators before and after the program. The staff for the laboratory found that the co-ordinators for the program had made several decisions which had significant effects on the participants without a full awareness of the focus of the laboratory. The main problem was that the workshop staff was not involved in the earlier stages of the in-service training program. When the program first began, laboratory training was not under consideration. When the switch in methodologies was decided upon,

some of the coordinators (of teachers) in the field were not briefed adequately and consequently responded with confusion and some blocking behavior. This could have been avoided with proper anticipation of the set and attitudes on the part of some of the coordinators and appropriate steps to deal with their feelings. Also, with this situation as it was, it would have helped in this program if the lab coordinator had not participated in the actual running of the lab, but served as a resource to both the staff of the lab and the administrators responsible for the program. Finally, all participants did not come to the workshop with a real awareness of the importance of the program. Whereas volunteers were expected, some conscripts arrived. This resulted in mixed levels of involvement on the part of the teachers, several of whom refused to attend evening sessions and often insisted on commuting up to one hundred miles each day rather than live at the laboratory site.

The staff felt some real sense of accomplishment at the end of the experience and were generally pleased with the successful blend of information sharing and laboratory method. This was achieved despite the frustration brought on by administrative problems prior to and during the workshop.

Footnotes

1 The training program was part of Operation Prevention, a cooperative endeavor of six West Florida counties (Bay, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, & Washington) and was supported by the Educational Research and Development Center of the University of West Florida and the Florida State Education Department.

2 While the authors assume all responsibility for the thoughts and opinions expressed in this paper, it should be clear that the workshop itself was the product of the entire staff. The staff included: David Culbreth, Tom Martin, Joyce Paris, R. K. Ready, John Reiser, Donald Schulte, Ronald Yarbrough.

3 Copies of the exercise can be obtained from Richard Goldberg, Department of Psychology, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida.

4 For information about obtaining a copy of this curriculum guide, write to Dr. Franklin Wittwer, Director, Educational Research and Development Center, University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida.

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* Also reprinted and distributed by the Student Association for the Study of Hallucinogens, 1970.